

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****Homeland Security Policymaking:
HSC at a Crossroads and Presidential
Study Directive 1**

April 2, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Homeland Security Policymaking: HSC at a Crossroads and Presidential Study Directive 1”:

“The Homeland Security Council was stood up in 2001—in the wake of the September 11th attacks—to enhance our nation’s ability to deter, detect, prevent, and respond to terrorism.

Later that year, when Congress authorized the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the decision was made to also codify—in law—the Homeland Security Council.

The language of Title Nine (IX) sets forth the composition and missions of the Council.

The Homeland Security Council is responsible for providing advice to the President on homeland security policies based on assessments of our nation’s risks.

It is also charged with overseeing, reviewing, and making recommendations to the President on Federal homeland security policies.

In its short history, the Homeland Security Council, by most accounts, has been an important driver of preparedness and response activities throughout the Nation.

With the change in Administration, the timing is ripe for asking key questions about whether how we’ve been doing homeland security policymaking over the past eight (8) years is still the way to go.

The President is to be commended for issuing “Presidential Study Directive 1” which established a study team to examine how to improve security policymaking at the White House.

As the study team is hard at work, developing its recommendations, I thought it would benefit the Committee for us to hear from people who know—all too well—about the challenges of the current homeland security policymaking apparatus.

I thank our distinguished panel of witnesses for being here to participate in one of our favorite Washington pastimes—“The Game of Speculation.”

For my part, I have been giving some thought to the potential outcomes of the study—which should emerge in late April—and see it going one of three ways.

- (1) they could propose dissolving the Homeland Security Council into the National Security Council;
- (2) they could propose retaining a two-Council system that is more integrated; or

(3) they could propose eliminating both Councils in favor of creating a new Council to handle the full continuum of security issues—everything from non-proliferation to emergency response.

There are strong cases to be made for better integration of homeland security and national security policies.

Whether a structural merger of the two White House councils is the best way to achieve better integration remains to be seen.

However, this Committee, given our oversight responsibilities, has a vested interest in making certain that whatever comes out of the White House review actually enhances homeland security.

Findings should be able to pass a basic three-part test:

First, will the findings enhance the Nation's security posture?

Second, will the Department of Homeland Security's effectiveness be bolstered? and

Third, will the findings enhance the voice of State, Local and Tribal authorities—our Nation's "first preventers" in the White House?"

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